

International Group Reviews Missouri Division of Fire Safety Accreditation

Representatives of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) reviewed the international accreditation of the Missouri Division of Fire Safety's fire service testing and certification programs from Dec. 15-17 in Jefferson City.

The site team reviewing the Division's programs was comprised of IFSAC Manager Rich Hall; Robert Pearson of the Washington, D.C. Fire Department; Charlie Lott of the Kentucky State Fire Commission; and David Couvelha of the Kansas Fire and Rescue Training Institute.

The Division of Fire Safety is internationally accredited for the certification levels of Hazardous Materials: Awareness and Operations, Fire Fighter I and II, Fire Service Instructor I, Fire Officer I, Fire Inspector I, and Fire Investigator. In addition to having these levels reviewed for re-accreditation, the team reviewed the levels of Fire Service Instructor II and Fire Officer II for initial accreditation.

The team will make their recommendation for accreditation to the IFSAC Certification Assembly Board of Governors at their April, 2006 annual meeting to be voted on by the membership. "It is obvious that a lot of hard work went into this program and the Missouri Division of Fire Safety staff should be commended on the hard work they have completed," IFSAC Manager Hall said. In the site team report, the team made no recommendations for changes or improvement. This is a rare and impressive achievement for a certifying entity.

During the site team's visit, they reviewed all the Division's certification procedures, policies, written test banks, and manipulative skill testing. They also observed a fire investigator skills exam and a regional written testing session with over 80 students from across the state.

IFSAC currently provides accreditation to entities that certify the competency of and issue certificates to individuals who pass examinations based on the National Fire Protection Association fire service professional qualifications and other standards approved by the Assembly. There are 58 Certificate Assembly member entities throughout the world having 452 accredited levels. IFSAC also accredits fire science or related academic programs at colleges and universities.

Deputy Chief Kim Becker explains, "The accreditation status provides Missouri fire fighters with certification portability. Being internationally accredited ensures the first responder the certification they receive in Missouri will be recognized in other states and countries. At the same time the review process ensures the Division of Fire Safety is operating a fair, credible, and valid training and certification program."

Another significant benefit of the accreditation and certification process is the assurance of consistent training and testing of firefighters and emergency responders who protect the citizens of Missouri.

The Division of Fire Safety's certification process must be re-evaluated by an IFSAC appointed team every five years in order to keep the international accreditation status. Since initial accreditation in 1996, the Missouri Division of Fire Safety has issued over 42,000 certifications to over 19,000 fire fighters and emergency first responders. There are an estimated 25,000 firefighters in the State of Missouri, 80% of whom volunteer their service.